

## **Born in Farnham 1944**

I was born in 1944 , so hopefully this will help when putting all your information into chronological order. I feel someone a few years older would be able to provide a very interesting picture of Farnham during the war years. I can just remember as a child that there was still sweet rationing and my mother had a booklet with coupons.

My memories of my childhood are happy and really uneventful. Although, there was one dramatic incident in my life but I was too young to remember it! I have been told that it was daytime and I was asleep upstairs in my cot (apparently, it was my mother's usual routine to put me in my pram in the garden but for some reason she hadn't on this particular day which was just as well). A small aeroplane approached and was in trouble and the pilot had to make an emergency landing. He came very low over our house, hitting the garage and fruit trees and then crash landed just across the road onto an open area (some houses are built there now). The impact caused window glass to shatter. Some glass fell around me in my cot but fortunately I had been sleeping face down and was unhurt. I understand that the pilot survived.

### Shops in Farnham

Kinghams , the shop was next to the passageway from West Street to St Andrew's church. I can recall large hams hanging up and there was wonderful smell of freshly ground coffee.

Spencers, at the corner at the top of Downing street. Here material & haberdashery might be purchased but the best thing here (from my childhood point of view) was watching payment. When you handed your money to the shop assistant , she would then place it in a cylindrical canister attached to some sort of pulley system, it then rapidly disappeared to another part of the shop. The container would then be quickly returned with your change and receipt.

Sainsburys, in The Borough. I think I must have been a little older by now but I recall going from counter to counter to make various separate purchases such as cheese, butter, bacon and meat. All were weighed out as required, butter was patted into shape from large blocks. I also remember some really beautiful tiles on the walls.

Roses, in East Street . The attraction here was the small pets for sale. I did become the proud owner of a budgerigar and my brother some goldfish.

Elphicks, still occupying the same site. Here I would enjoy looking at pattern style books and materials for a dress that my mother would make for me on her Singer sewing machine. Pullingers is another shop still in the same place.

As we lived only a mile from the town centre (off Crondall Lane), we normally walked into town but after shopping and with bags to carry, we would often catch a bus back home. We would stand at a bus stop in The Borough (on the opposite side of the road to where bus stops are still sited) and wait for the number 7 bus to approach from the right, there was no "one way" road system then. The bus would be

a green Aldershot & District Traction company one and have both a driver and a conductor or conductress who wore a ticket dispenser on a stout strap over his/her shoulder. This firm had a large depot in nearby Aldershot (now largely built over).

Some goods were delivered, such as milk daily, this was essential as we did not own a fridge. A bread rounds man called carrying a very large oblong basket with a variety of bread. Coal was delivered from a lorry, the coal man would hump large bags on his shoulders and empty the bags into the coal shed, I can remember being asked to count the number of bags brought in. Coal fires were the means of heating the house and also for hot water. It was warm in the room with the fire but cold in the rest of the house.

Farnham has fortunately retained much of its historical character. One major change was the demolition of the shops in the area where the Woolmead now stands. Another was the loss of the livestock market area in South Street where Sainsburys and the car park is now sited. A large Gasometer stood in East Street, this area now has business units and some housing. St James's church in East Street was still in use a church. The Ambulance station used to be in West Street, near but on the opposite side of the road from Crondall Lane and the Fire station was in South Street near the council offices. Allotments were situated where the Art School now stands.

There were two cinemas in Farnham. One, "The Regent" (I think this was its name) went in the re-developments mentioned in the above paragraph. However, the one I went to was "The Odeon". Here I would go regularly for Saturday morning pictures, probably up to about the age of ten. I would walk into the town with friends (no adult accompanied us) and enjoyed cartoons and films such as the adventures of The Lone Ranger.

When playing with friends, we might be in a garden but we would also play in the road, there wasn't much traffic. We were also allowed to explore further afield. One favourite was a place we used to call "Breakneck", it was reached by a path from Waynflete Lane and down footsteps to a small bridge over a stream, we had great fun with imaginary games jumping over the stream. From there we could walk on further over fields to Dippenhall and wander through woods.

There were two hop fields nearby. One where The Chantries estate is built and another next to Crondall Lane behind the houses in Beavers Road. Each year I was used to seeing the empty area rapidly filled with dense foliage as the hop vines grew until they were towering above with their amazing papery cones, they were then picked and all cleared away in the late summer.

Sometimes we walked from Byworth Road through the hop fields to West Street emerging opposite the cemetery. After crossing the road, we could either follow a footpath which ran between The Memorial Hall and Crosbies or walk further on and go down Mead Lane which led us to the meadows. Crosbies was a major employer in the town but now the site is covered with housing and offices. Once in the meadows, we would look for sticklebacks and minnows in the river, occasionally also seeing

crayfish. We would then head for the back of St Andrews church, passing a field where an archery club often would be seen practising.

I learned to swim at the open air swimming baths off South Street. The lessons were conducted in the small pool and were part of the school curriculum in the summer. Once I could swim, I was frequently there particularly in the summer holidays. I would walk there with my brother and friends. Being "open air" unheated baths, they were closed in the Winter and I would look forward to when they opened for the new season, I think in April. The water temperature was put on a notice board and sometimes it was really quite cold ! After a swim, it was a treat to go to the cafe kiosk and buy a hot drink of Bovril.

We didn't have a telephone until I was about 12 years old. If we needed to ring anybody, then we walked to a red Telephone Box about 250yards away. I was shown how to make a call, when to insert my money and when to press one of the buttons to make the connection or to have my money returned.

I have tried to write about a few things that seemed significant to me rather than my complete childhood! I have left out my schools, St Andrew's Infants, and then the Girls school on the same site because I assume you will have a vast amount of information here particularly as they put together a memory book last year as part of their celebrations. Sitting the 11+ examination determined where secondary education was to continue. Life is often portrayed as austere in the post war years but I certainly never felt it despite the lack of a car, central heating, fridge/freezer, television or telephone These life style changes are of course general and not specific to Farnham.